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## Hightower Testimony

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

## ARRA Overview

## Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties

Good morning. My name is Clarence Hightower and I am executive director of Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties. Our mission is to mobilize resources to reduce poverty and we are one of 28 Community Action agencies in the

state that is tasked with this responsibility.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning on the great things that the stimulus funding is doing in Minnesota---particularly for low income people.

Statewide Community Action Agencies received approximately \$150 million in stimulus funding for weatherization, for Head Start and for Community Services Block Grant programs.

My own agency—one of the largest in the state--- received a total of \$14.4 million in stimulus funding to help low-income residents in Ramsey & Washington Counties recover and rebuild.

- We anticipate this work will create or save 176 jobs
- Help stabilize families in crisis
- And make our community stronger in the future.

**Funds came to us in 3 Buckets**

**a) Weatherization—the state received \$132 million to make homes more energy efficient.**

- Wisely—the state looked to Community Action Agencies to do this work—I think appropriately--- because Community Action has been performing weatherization work for over 30 years

- While waiting for funding from Washington, weatherization programs across the state cobbled together funds to ramp up at an accelerated pace, including purchasing equipment to handle the additional work.

Now that 50% of the funds have been received, service providers are weatherizing homes at a record pace.

**Closer to home, over \$12 million of our agency’s funding is dedicated to weatherizing homes in the two counties we serve.**

- We’ve hired an extra 18 people—including---journeyman---apprentices—energy auditor—job costers.

- We are working with 23 additional mechanical crews—bringing the total to 72 mechanical crews--- to insure we get the job done.

- In a normal year, we weatherize about 350 homes. Over the next 24 months we are helping more than 1,700 homeowners and renters.

- Historically there have been two models use to complete the weatherization process.

· A contracted crew model

An internal crew model

This year we will use both models, seeking contractors help to complete about 500 homes.

## **b) Head Start and Early Head Start**

- Statewide, Head Start received almost \$8 million. Community Action received \$584 thousand which we are using to expand the capacity of our Head Start and Early Head Start program. Extra 15% or 160 children will receive quality care and early childhood education, and their parents will be able to participate in family development and self-sufficiency programs.

## **c) CSBG**

- Statewide, the \$12 million in ARRA block grant funds will be used to
- save over 850 jobs,

- create over 700 additional jobs
- Provide direct assistance in obtaining a job to nearly 2,000 unemployed people.
- Removing barriers to obtaining employment will help nearly 35,000 families. The work ranges from a car loan repair program ensuring reliable transportation to a job transition program providing real life experience to help for families in financial crisis.

At Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties, \$1.6 million will help stabilize families and provide job training.

- Our self- sufficiency program we will be able to help almost 600 additional people with case management services, car loans, employment search, benefits screening, and budgeting. Staff will work individually with participants to remove barriers to employment such as language or transportation, and better prepare them to be competitive job applicants during this recession.

### **As I close—let me lift up 3 Concerns about Issues/Process**

- The issue surrounding Davis Bacon still linger. Training on Davis Bacon has been scheduled in Minnesota for mid-September---we are excitedly waiting.

- All Community Action agencies are very concerned about reporting requirements. We know when stuff is due---we don't know what is due.

- The notion of Inclusion---particularly in the weatherization/green jobs----is a concern. Historically people of color have been left out of this field.